GREAT DECISIONS '85

NATIONAL OPINION BALLOT REPORT

A4965-14
8/85

July 1985

*This **National Opinion Ballot Report** is based on the nationwide mailing of "Opinion Ballots" by participants in the **Great Decisions** program for 1985. The report is based on 67,121 opinion ballots cast as of May 31, 1985. The ballots were tabulated under the supervision of Esther Fleishman, vice president of Louis Harris and Associates, Inc.*

*Ballots are bound in the **Great Decisions '85** book, prepared by the editors of the nonpartisan Foreign Policy Association. The 96-page book includes background and analyses of eight critical U.S. foreign policy issues facing the United States. More than 250,000 Americans joined in study and discussion of the eight topics during February and March. This is the 31st year of the nationwide **Great Decisions** study and discussion program, the largest citizen education program of its kind in the country.*

BACKGROUND ON '85 BALLOT REPORT

Each ballot deals with one of eight current foreign policy topics. Under each topic one or more issues are placed on the ballot, with participants asked to select for each issue the one option, among several offered, which comes closest to their own opinions, or to agree or disagree with each of several options offered.

The large number of ballots received made it necessary to sample the returns for tabulation. By randomly selecting one of every three ballots cast on the first topic and one of every two ballots cast on each of the other seven topics, for a total of 31,845 ballots tabulated (67,121 cast) by May 31, 1985, the results are the same as they would be if each ballot had been tabulated. Random selection affects only the cost of tabulation and not the representativeness of the opinions expressed.

Computerization of ballots was performed by Calculogic Corporation, 2929 Broadway, New York, NY, which furnished printouts on which this report, prepared by Esther Fleishman, vice president of Louis Harris and Associates, Inc., is based. Opinion ballots received after May 31 are being counted, but unless they alter trends shown in this analysis, a later report will not be issued.

This report is being presented by the Foreign Policy Association to members of Congress and the Executive Branch. It also is being sent to the news media and is available to all interested citizens who wish to receive a copy.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

Those who filled out opinion ballots were asked to give some information about themselves.

This year, high school students made up 9% of the participants in the program, and college students 2%. All but 14% had some college education and 68% had a baccalaureate or an advanced degree. This year, 13% of the participants were under 30, and 58% were 61 or over. Women outnumbered men almost two to one. A very high percentage of the group qualify as foreign policy "opinion leaders" in the sense that they say they are asked for their opinion on foreign policy matters often (16%) or sometimes (52%).

Because participants were asked to indicate the first three digits of their zip code on each ballot, it is possible to tell what states contributed most heavily to the tabulated results. The greatest number of ballots were received from Oregon, California, Illinois, Ohio, New York, Florida, Virginia, Colorado, Maryland, North Carolina, in that order. Zip code information was missing from less than 1 percent of the tabulated ballots.

***A. How many years have you participated in the *GREAT DECISIONS* program (that is, attended one or more discussion sessions)?**

1. This is the first year I have participated.	36%
2. I participated in one previous year.	17%
3. I participated in more than one previous year.	47%

***B. What is your age?**

1. 17 or under	1%
2. 18 to 30	12%
3. 31 to 45	11%
4. 46 to 60	18%
5. 61 or over	58%

***C. Your sex?**

1. Female	64%
2. Male	36%

***D. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?**

1. Some high school (all 8.7% currently enrolled)	9%
2. High school graduate	5%
3. Some college (including 2% currently enrolled)	18%
4. College graduate	34%
5. Advanced degree	34%

***E. How often are you asked for your opinion on foreign policy matters?**

1. Often	16%
2. Sometimes	52%
3. Hardly ever	33%

***F. One final question. Would you say you have or have not changed your opinion in a fairly significant way as a result of taking part in the *GREAT DECISIONS* program?**

1. Have	39%
2. Have not	39%
3. Uncertain	22%

*7–9% nonresponse

Topic 1: REVOLUTIONARY CUBA:
Toward Accommodation or Conflict?

Ballots Tabulated: 3,431

In its policy toward Cuba, the U.S. should:

Abandon the U.S. trade embargo and efforts to isolate Cuba in the hope of weaning it from the Soviet Union.

36%

Negotiate a renewal of diplomatic relations, provided Castro is willing to cut his military ties to Moscow and cease efforts to "export revolution" to Latin America.

34%

Keep up economic and diplomatic pressure on Cuba.

20%

Other, no response.

11%

The most important goal of U.S. policy toward Central America is to:

Prevent Communist expansion by any means necessary, including military force.

14%

Prevent Communist expansion by any means necessary, except military force.

14%

Promote democracy by withholding support from governments that violate political and human rights.

23%

Promote economic and social development by increasing U.S. economic aid and trade.

43%

Other, no response.

6%

Keeping up economic and diplomatic pressure on Cuba was favored by only 20% of the respondents. Almost identical numbers favored two other options: (1) abandoning the U.S. trade embargo and efforts to isolate Cuba (36%), and (2) negotiating a renewal of diplomatic relations provided Castro is willing to cut his military ties to Moscow and cease efforts to "export revolution" (34%).

Central America. The most important goal of U.S. policy toward Central America as a whole, according to 43% of the respondents, is to promote economic and social development by increasing U.S. economic aid and trade. Only 14% considered the most important goal preventing Communist expansion by any means necessary, *except* with military force. An equal number would achieve this goal by any means, *including* military force.

"PUT ME DOWN FOR 'NO COMMENT' ON THAT ONE... I REALLY HAVEN'T READ ENOUGH POLLS ON THE SUBJECT TO FORM AN OPINION!"

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Topic 2: SOVIET LEADERSHIP IN TRANSITION
What Impact on Superpower Relations?

Ballots Tabulated: 4,860

In its arms control policy toward the U.S.S.R., the U.S. should:

Offer significant concessions to the Soviet Union to persuade it to resume arms control negotiations.

13%

Offer no concessions to the Soviet Union but indicate a readiness to resume arms control negotiations.

74%

Resume arms control negotiations only if the Soviets offer significant concessions in advance.

5%

Cease efforts to negotiate arms control with the Soviet Union.

1%

Other, no response.

7%

In its economic policy toward the Soviet Union, the U.S. should:

Apply economic sanctions in order to undermine the Soviet economy, including its defense industry.

9%

Apply economic sanctions only in retaliation for severe Soviet provocation.

41%

Abandon the use of economic sanctions.

43%

Other, no response.

7%

In its political relations with the Soviet Union, the U.S. should:

Seek to improve relations across the board at all diplomatic levels.

79%

Link agreement with the Soviet Union in one area to Soviet concessions in other areas.

13%

Negotiate only to advance specific U.S. interests.

7%

Other, no response.

2%

Soviet Leadership in Transition

Opinion is very well crystallized in the fields of U.S. arms control policy and political relations with the Soviet Union, but much more divided in the area of U.S. economic policy. Respondents are almost evenly divided between those who favor abandoning the use of economic sanctions(43%) and those who would apply economic sanctions only in retaliation for severe Soviet provocation (41%).

Topic 3: IRAN-IRAQ WAR:
What Role for the U.S. in Persian Gulf?

Ballots Tabulated: 4,545

In its policy toward the Iran-Iraq war, the U.S. should:

Tilt toward Iran because it is the more important power strategically and demographically.

2%

Tilt toward Iraq because an Iranian victory could help destabilize governments friendly to the U.S.

15%

Observe strict neutrality since the U.S. has little influence on either belligerent.

75%

Other, no response.

7%

To secure its interests in the Persian Gulf, the U.S. should:

Assume responsibility for the military defense of the Gulf.

3%

Defend the Gulf militarily only in conjunction with U.S. allies.

42%

Rely on diplomacy, not military force.

49%

Other, no response.

6%

Iran-Iraq War

Given the choice of tilting toward Iran or Iraq or observing strict neutrality since the United States has little influence with either belligerent, respondents by an overwhelming majority opt for strict neutrality. Consistent with the preponderant sentiment for neutrality, only 3% think that the United States should secure its interests in the Persian Gulf by assuming responsibility for the Gulf's military defense. Nearly half (49%) would rely on diplomacy alone; 42% would be prepared to use military force but only in conjunction with U.S. allies.

Topic 4: BUDGET DEFICIT, TRADE & THE DOLLAR: The Economics of Foreign Policy

Ballots Tabulated: 4,289

How would you rate the following steps in terms of their effectiveness in reducing the Federal budget deficit?

	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Very Effective
Increase taxes.	29%	49%	22%
Reduce Federal spending by cutting defense programs.	64%	30%	6%
Reduce Federal spending by cutting social programs.	19%	42%	39%
Do nothing: as economic recovery continues, deficit will shrink.	4%	15%	81%

The trading policy that best meets U.S. needs for the 1980s is:

Free trade.

Fair trade.

Protectionism.

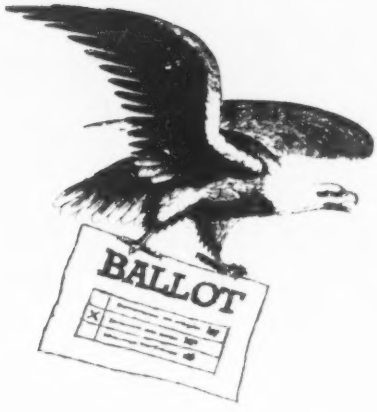
Industrial policy.

Budget Deficit, Trade & the Dollar

Asked to rate the effectiveness of steps that might be taken to reduce the Federal budget deficit, respondents clearly opt for some sort of Federal policy as opposed to doing nothing. Most respondents (64%) give a "very effective" rating to reducing Federal spending by cutting defense programs, 29% to increasing taxes, and 19% to reducing Federal spending by cutting social programs.

When asked what trading policy best meets U.S. needs for the 1980s, a majority (56%) name fair trade, about one third free trade, and only 4% protectionism.

The Foreign Policy Association has carried out this national tabulation of opinion ballots as a public service. The results express the views of ***GREAT DECISIONS*** *participants, not those of the FPA, which is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan educational organization and takes no position on issues of U.S. foreign policy.*



Topic 5: THE PHILIPPINES: What Future for Democracy?

Ballots Tabulated: 3,919

In its relations with the Philippines, the U.S. should:

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
Link U.S. military and economic aid for the Philippines to democratic reforms there.	33%	43%	15%	9%
Maintain a "hands-off" policy toward both the government and the opposition.	20%	31%	29%	20%
Use quiet diplomacy rather than public pressure to persuade Marcos to adopt democratic reforms.	50%	32%	11%	7%
Continue to support the Marcos government and disregard internal politics in the Philippines.	3%	13%	26%	58%

The Philippines

Using quiet diplomacy rather than public pressure to persuade President Marcos to adopt democratic reforms received the strongest support. Only 16% think that the United States should continue to support the Marcos government and disregard internal politics in the Philippines.

Topic 6: POPULATION GROWTH: Critical North-South Issue?

Ballots Tabulated: 3,808

The U.S. should:

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
Encourage third-world countries to adopt compulsory measures to curb population growth.	44%	30%	14%	11%
Encourage third-world countries to rely on free enterprise to spur development and reduce population growth.	32%	36%	18%	15%
Provide family-planning aid to countries regardless of the specific family-planning measures.	62%	22%	10%	6%
Provide family-planning aid only to third-world countries that prohibit abortion as a population control method.	8%	8%	15%	69%
Contribute to private international organizations that provide family-planning services, including abortion.	59%	23%	8%	10%
Increase U.S. contributions to intergovernmental organizations that provide family-planning services.	63%	25%	8%	5%

How would you rate the following in terms of their effectiveness in reducing population growth?

	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Very Effective
Raising standard of living of third-world countries.	58%	34%	7%
Educating women and raising their status.	82%	17%	2%
Lowering infant mortality.	38%	38%	24%
Making family-planning services widely available.	77%	20%	3%
Providing for a more equitable distribution of resources between North and South.	33%	42%	26%

Population Growth

There is widespread agreement among respondents that the problem of population growth must be attacked on all fronts, including increasing U.S. contributions to intergovernmental organizations that provide family-planning services. The one policy option that received little support (16%) is one that would provide family planning aid only to those third world countries that prohibit abortion as a method of population control. In terms of the effectiveness of various ways to reduce population growth, there is near unanimity on three of five proposals: educating women and raising their status (99%), making family-planning services widely available (97%), and raising the standard of living of third world countries (92%).

FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION 1918

HOW TO ORDER

• **Great Decisions '85 Opinion Ballot Report**
One to nine copies, free of charge. There will be a charge of $1.00 each for orders of ten or more copies.

• **Great Decisions '85 Briefing Book**
Prepared annually by the editors of the Foreign Policy Association, **Great Decisions** provides clear, concise and impartial analyses of eight of the most important international issues facing the U.S. in one, 96-page volume. (Price: $6.00 each, plus $1.00 for postage and handling.)

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Topic 7: FUTURE OF THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE: Unity in Diversity?

Ballots Tabulated: 3,442

In its military relations with the European members of NATO, the U.S. should:

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
Continue present policy of flexible response and strengthening of NATO's nuclear and conventional forces.	38%	33%	16%	13%
Support adoption of a no-first-use of nuclear weapons policy only after strengthening NATO's conventional forces.	20%	35%	24%	21%
Support immediate adoption of a no-first-use of nuclear weapons policy.	38%	18%	17%	28%
Support a mutual, verifiable freeze and negotiate to reduce present levels of nuclear weapons.	71%	17%	7%	6%

In its political relations with the European members of NATO, the U.S. should:

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
Withdraw its forces from Europe unless its European allies substantially increase their financial contribution to NATO's defense.	10%	27%	36%	27%
Keep its forces in Europe but urge European members to increase substantially their financial contribution to NATO's defense.	47%	37%	11%	5%
Seek expanded cooperation on issues which are not part of NATO's normal areas of responsibility, e.g., the Middle East.	32%	38%	17%	12%
Accept the fact of alliance differences and continue to cooperate with its allies where interests coincide.	66%	27%	5%	2%

Atlantic Alliance

In the area of military relations with the European members of NATO, a large majority (71%) agree strongly that the United States should support a mutual, verifiable freeze and negotiations to reduce present levels of nuclear weapons. Two other options, (1) continuation of the present policy of flexible response and strengthening of NATO's nuclear and conventional forces and (2) immediate adoption of a no-first-use of nuclear weapons policy, win strong approval from over one third of the respondents. On the question of political relations with European members of NATO, strongest agreement (93%) is voiced for the proposition that the United States should accept alliance differences and continue to cooperate where interests coincide. But 84% also feel the United States should urge Europeans to increase substantially their financial contributions to NATO's defense.

Topic 8: U.S. INTELLIGENCE: The Role of Undercover Operations

Ballots Tabulated: 3,551

For the U.S.:

Covert action is a necessary instrument of national security policy at all times.

Covert action is a necessary instrument of national security policy but it should be used only in rare circumstances, for example as an alternative to military action.

Covert action is not essential to national security, and should never be used. If an action is called for, the government should make its case openly to Congress and the public.

Other, no response.

U.S. Intelligence

While most respondents (77%) find covert action a necessary instrument of national security policy, about half (51%) favor its use only in rare circumstances, for example as an alternative to military action.

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